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CHRISTIAN CONSCIENCE AND THE STATE

by

ROBERT L. CALHOUN
ROLAND H. BANTON

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ALFRED W. SWAN, *Chairman*

DWIGHT J. BRADLEY, *Executive Director*

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Roland H. Bainton is Professor of Church History, and Robert L. Calhoun is Professor of Historical Theology, both at Yale Divinity School.

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THE DICTATES OF CONSCIENCE

It is an illustration of the breadth of mind which characterizes true pacifism that the authors of this presentation of the theory and practice of that philosophy should have invited one who does not share their viewpoint to write this word of introduction.

It is not because such courtesy calls for reciprocal courtesy on my part, but because this seems to me a most timely and illuminating treatment of the subject, that I commend it to all readers.

Furthermore the occasion gives me opportunity to join the authors in the thesis that "a clear-thinking church must affirm that every Christian is to follow his own conscience through thick and thin."

Two men kneel together at the same altar, praying to the same God. Rising from their knees, the one feels it to be God's will that he should go to war, the other that he should abstain from war in any form. What is the reason for this divergence of belief?

Plainly the source of it is not in God. The difficulty is that no human mind is pure enough to reflect the bright perfection of God's will. Each man must live according to such light as he can attain unto.

The Church confidently looks toward the day when the diverse opinions of her members shall be resolved through God's further revelation in a higher synthesis.

In the meantime she welcomes to her altars conscientious pacifists and conscientious non-pacifists.

She will do more than welcome them: with all her resources and with unflagging patience she will protect them in their convictions.

—DOUGLAS HORTON

CHRISTIAN CONSCIENCE AND THE STATE

● by ROLAND H. BAINTON

ROBERT L. CALHOUN

During the past two years, the Congregational Christian churches have joined with others in a new approach to an old problem. The old problem is what should be done about conscientious objectors to war who are members of other churches than "the historic peace churches," such as the Society of Friends (Quakers), the Mennonites, and the Church of the Brethren. The new approach is provision by the churches themselves for voluntary registration of individual conscientious objectors within their membership, as a basis for further action both before and after compulsory registration for military service may go into effect.

The problem of these individual objectors has hitherto proved a thorny one, both for themselves and for the government. Men bound by conscientious scruples, in an area of conflict not yet clearly charted and full of competing loyalties, have sometimes acted with more bravery and stubbornness than wisdom. Government officers, both civil and military, in trying to be fair at once to sincere objectors and to the community for whose well-being the government is responsible, have sometimes thought it necessary to use physical and mental persecution to determine which objectors are sincere and which are shirkers or cowards. In mediating between a government trying to be fair and individuals trying to do right, the American churches may perform a valuable service if they can devise appropriate ways and means. Registration of the conscientious objectors in their own membership is a first step.

Another step of capital importance is to help work out more clearly the several main courses of action that are open to straight-thinking Christian citizens, on the one hand, and

to a fair-minded democratic government, on the other. This is the sort of analysis that has to be made anew whenever the intricate relations between the individual and the state are subjected to a new set of stresses and strains, as they are now by the impact of "total war" on industrial societies. Until it is done more completely, along lines already opened by yeoman service on the part of many church groups, the conduct of all parties in a case of conscientious objection is likely to be marked by confusion, irritation and resentment rather than intelligent agreement or disagreement and mutual understanding and respect. In a democratic society, still more in a Christian church, there can and ought to be understanding and respect even where profound disagreement continues—nay, even when coercion or punishment of individuals seems necessary to social well-being. Whatever the churches can do, through clarification of the issues, to help bring about that better sort of relationship between conscientious objectors, their government, and their fellow citizens, is plainly a part of the churches' ministry of reconciliation.

Great Britain came to grips with this problem earlier, and has gone further toward a sound solution from the side of government, than the United States. The conscription bill recently passed by Congress¹ was originally drawn, so far as our problem is concerned, on the basis of American practice worked out during the first World War. In many respects it has been greatly improved during Congressional hearings and debate. But the British National Service Act of 1939 still shows far clearer understanding of the issues involved, and might well serve to direct American thought toward still further improvements in our method of dealing with conscientious objectors. The essential principles recognized by the British act, and at first entirely overlooked by the American bill, are three: (1)

1. "The Selective Training and Service Act of 1940," introduced in the Senate on June 20 by Senator Burke, and in the House by Representative Wadsworth. Original text in *The New York Times*, June 21, 1940, p. 2. Final text in *The New York Times*, September 15, 1940, pp. 30-31.

that the sound and sufficient basis for conscientious objection to military service is not membership in a particular church, but genuine personal conviction that for oneself military service is wrong; (2) that the task of determining whether such conviction exists in a given person is better performed by civil rather than by military courts; (3) that exemption granted on the basis of such convictions should be, if necessary, from war service of every sort, and not merely from combatant service. These are principles which the British government in 1939, face to face with impending war, judged to be sound and embodied in the National Service Act now in force. If the churches of the United States can help to get their importance more fully recognized in this country also, it will be a service alike to Christianity, democracy, and good government. Individual conviction is the heart of the problem.

I. THE INDIVIDUAL IN ORGANIZED SOCIETY

Apart from human society there are no human persons. The self-made, self-sufficient human individual is a delusion. So far as we can judge, there never has been such a one on the earth, and there never will be. Man is a social being, whose body and soul are nurtured in the living networks of social groups to which he belongs: family, neighborhood, school, business, party, church and many more.

Together these make up *the community* in which a given person lives and moves. It may be very small—a primitive, mediaeval, or frontier village, for example—and his life in it relatively unified and simple. It may be very large—a modern nation, an empire, even a world society—embracing all sorts of lesser groups within its complex fabric.

If ordered life is to be maintained within one of these larger, more complex communities, full of competing groups each bent on pursuing interests of its own, there has to be an association or institution that cuts across all the lesser groups, that can arbitrate and help to adjust their competing interests,

and that has power to enforce its decisions by coercive means when necessary. This institution is *the state*, and without it a large, complex community could not escape disintegration.

The Democratic State

The state is not the whole community in all its aspects, but that portion of the community that provides the effective authority for the making and enforcing of law. Non-citizens, for example, are members of the community but not of the state. On the other hand, the state is not simply the government, which is a group of persons who for a given time perform the actual work of making, interpreting and enforcing laws. Governments change, even when the state endures. The state, moreover, endures even when the form of government, and not merely its personnel or policy, undergoes drastic revision. For the state is the political base of any and all governments, the fluid but stable reservoir of power to govern.

The coercive power of the state and the right to exercise that power is usually called its sovereignty. Within the territorial and social bounds of its own community, now usually a nation or an empire, the state must be able to wield force sufficient to impose its will on any individual or group through the exercise of police power. Otherwise it would lack sovereignty and would not be a state, but only one more competing group. It would be a private and not a public institution. On the other hand, mere brute force is not sovereignty. Only where superior force is used within an enduring framework of law does a state exist and only there is its primary end realized: a social life ordered for the common well-being. To formulate and modify this framework of law, as well as to interpret and enforce it, is likewise a basic function of the state.² All these functions have to be performed through governments that serve as temporary vehicles of public authority and power.

2. An excellent thumbnail sketch of the nature of the state, by Dr. Hugh Vernon White, may be found in *SOCIAL ACTION*, Nov. 15, 1939, pp. 4-8. The best full-length discussion we know is R. M. MacIver: *The Modern State* (Oxford University Press).

In Peacetime

In time of peace, the sovereignty of the state within its territorial bounds is normally beyond serious challenge. Law-breaking individuals or groups are called to account in routine fashion, with the approval of virtually all members of the community who are competent to judge. Yet even in time of peace, sovereignty is limited in a number of ways. Democratic states acknowledge and emphasize certain of these limitations. They recognize that the organized community, with its diverse interests, is more than the state. The latter, powerful though it is, can never bring all of community life under its control, and in consequence is limited by the very nature of society, the human beings who compose it, and the world they live in.

This view of the state in its basic relations was affirmed in unforgettable language in the Declaration of Independence: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness—That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed,—That whenever any form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness."

The Americans who wrote those words were in no mood to confuse the existing colonial government with the true state, which is the base of the people's power to institute and alter governments as need arises. Neither did they confuse the state itself, this political association, with the community whose "Safety and Happiness" it is meant to secure. Nor did they regard even the community and its competing interests as ultimate, but rather as subject to "certain unalienable Rights" with which all men "are endowed by their Creator."

The just authority of any government derives from "the consent of the governed." And even more ultimate, to their way of thinking, are "the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God."

Here are distinctions that are vital to democratic political life. Democracy insists that the state is made for man, not man for the state. Life is more than law, though law is indispensable to civilized life. There are ranges of human interest and duty that are not made by the state, nor subject in the last analysis even to its sovereign control. All this is fundamental American doctrine.

In normal times, a stable democratic government acknowledges all of it more or less frankly. Such government thrives on criticism, and provides a regular place for opposition parties both in and out of the government. It meets the clashes of interest between competing individuals or groups with steady efforts to find equitable modes of adjustment. It guarantees even to critics and opponents of its own policies and principles a fair hearing, and immunity from arbitrary or unreasonable punishment, when punishment seems necessary. Opposition to existing laws may be carried to the courts, and judged in the light of the great principles briefly invoked in the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. So the body of law itself may come to be modified, in what is taken at the time to be the direction of more complete justice. Needless to say, such decisions are themselves open to revision or reversal as new needs or insights may require. Democratic government is flexible government.

In Time of War

In times of crisis, this normal mode of response to opposition suffers more or less drastic change. Opposition is discouraged and uniformity praised. Outspoken dissenters may be silenced, and secret ones hunted out. Existing laws are more stringently interpreted and enforced. New laws are passed, increasing the powers of the government and decreasing the freedom of actual or potential opponents.

This is all familiar, and understandable. In time of crisis, the state dare not lose its grip, else anarchy will result. The existing government, burdened with heavy responsibilities, tends to identify itself with the state, the very source of political power. At the same time, it tends to act as though the state were the community itself and tries to bring all community life under strict political control. Finally, it tends to regard political sovereignty as ultimate and to disregard or deny the superior claims of any "Laws of Nature and of Nature's God," save as these can be used as emotional sanctions for government policy.

A typical crisis situation is, of course, the outbreak of war. At present there is no inclusive, international authority to arbitrate disputes between sovereign nation-states, as they arbitrate between their own constituent groups, or as a federal government can arbitrate between local governments within its territory. Hence, when the "vital interests" of one state—its demands for prosperity, security and national honor—collide with those of another and when diplomatic efforts at adjustment fail, the only choice now open is submission or war. Since no government in its senses will go to war except to defend what it regards as vital interests, every war has the guise, for at least one of the belligerents, of a life-or-death struggle. When they are evenly matched, it becomes that for both. In wartime, therefore, even normally democratic governments curtail peacetime liberties for the sake of survival and victory.

The result is what looks like totalitarianism. It differs from the latter, in principle, only because the crisis situation is recognized as abnormal, temporary and undesirable. The determination to return as swiftly as possible to a better way is a factor of prime importance for democracy.

The Totalitarian State

A totalitarian society, unlike a democratic one, rejects in principle the distinctions so clearly affirmed in our Declara-

tion of Independence. It magnifies the state to embrace the whole of the community life. The will of God becomes just another name for the national will. All serious dissent is heresy, and opposition to the state a sacrilege. Its familiar cures for conscientious objection are castor oil, barbed wire, and bullets.

The chief virtues of such a society are certain of the soldier virtues: discipline, loyalty, hard courage, self-sacrifice. Its emotional drive can be tremendous. It can lift a people out of self-indulgence or despondency into lean, fanatical strength. It can build guns out of a nation's food budget, and beat down softer opponents at lightning speed. One of the greatest blunders of the western democracies has been to under-rate these virtues—which are by no means inconsistent with democratic living—and the fearful power of a people that combines them, for destructive purposes, with high intelligence and even a modest supply of physical resources.

Germany has proved once more how well suited a ruthlessly unified society is for war. It has not yet been shown that such a state can long endure unmodified in time of peace.

Conscience and its Claims

Meanwhile, there is another sort of control operating in the lives of men: the factor known as conscience. Political control is exercised through persuasion, through various appeals to national loyalty and through physical coercion, actual or implied. As we have seen, the use of force is always in the background of political sovereignty. But the orders of a government can be enforced upon reluctant individuals or groups only as far as coercive measures can be made good. For example, the outward public behavior of persons can be largely brought under control, but their motives and private opinions cannot. Conscience, on the other hand, applies directly to this latter area—to the inner desires and convictions from which outward behavior springs. Its control is exercised not through physical coercion, but through another sort of compulsion

which in some respects is weaker, in other respects stronger than the power of a mighty state. *Indeed, the efforts of hard-headed rulers to get control of education, literature, and organized religion testify to the strength of the inner springs of behavior that cannot be directly controlled by physical force.*

Conscience is the awareness of right and wrong as these appear to individual persons in particular sets of circumstances. Conscientious behavior is action in line with what seems to the individual to be right. This is a different thing from acting simply in line with what he wants. It may or may not be in accord with his most obvious desire at the moment. Often it involves rejection of a strong present desire on the ground that though he now *wants* to do one thing (go fishing, buy a new car, cash in on the ignorance of a customer), he *ought* to do another (stay on the job, save for his son's education, be fair to one in a weaker bargaining position). The experience of this sort of choice, in which what I ought—or believe I ought—to do overrules a strong personal desire, is perhaps the most distinctive and crucial kind of experience a human being can have. It marks the difference between being a moral self, a responsible person, and being an irresponsible, non-moral animal or infant, guided only by sensory stimuli, present desires and physical compulsions.

The claims to which conscience responds are exerted neither through physical force nor through direct impact on the sense organs, as colors or sounds make themselves felt. They are exerted, rather, as a problem in arithmetic demands a correct answer, or as fine music demands preference over trash. Only a rational person capable of appreciating truth or beauty can be aware of such demands at all. Dogs can respond to sounds and smells, but not to errors in a bank balance, nor to perfection of form in a symphony. Persons trained in arithmetic or in music become aware of mathematical and musical requirements that neither dogs nor untrained persons can recognize at all. In like manner, moral demands become recognizable only to persons trained in moral living, and in making

the special kind of choices between right and not-right that such living involves.

Since conscience is trained in the give and take of social living, it is natural that one's judgments of what is right and what is wrong tend to follow closely the accepted patterns of the community in which one is brought up. Yet just as individual judgments about mathematics, music, or moral problems can be mistaken, so even widely accepted views in any of these fields can be mistaken or inadequate. That is why progress beyond the level of insight attained by a given social community is possible. Thus ritual murder and chattel slavery come into disrepute and at length are abolished by common consent. That is why individuals who, like Socrates and Jesus, are condemned to death as disloyal by their own communities may later be regarded as having seen the right more clearly than their judges. If the issue were merely a clash of personal wishes, each person would always be right from his own point of view, and the majority would always be right from the social point of view. Conscientious judgment, whether well-grounded or mistaken, is always more than an expression of personal wishes. It is an attempt to subject personal wishes and social habits alike to the test of requirements rooted in the nature of man and the real world in which he has to live.

The Church and the Social Order

To religious people, these requirements by which human wishes and habits are judged have appeared to be the will or the law of God. Dedicated to the quest, interpretation and fulfilment of this divine will, the church has a special place among the institutions of society. Like the state, it seeks to discipline the raw competing interests of individuals and groups. But whereas the state employs mainly legal and physical constraints, the church appeals directly to the wills and consciences of men and tries to influence their behavior by influencing their motives. The state seeks to control what men do, so that they may not encroach on their neighbors nor

upset the stable life of the community. The church seeks to bring their very desires more and more into line with the will of God.

In a sense, the church is a socialized expression of men's acknowledgment of responsibility to God as their supreme Sovereign. There have been times, and there are now places, in which the church has had to confront the state as the champion of conscience against political compulsion. Democratic states are committed in principle, as we have seen, to encouragement of individual initiative, with all the differences of judgment that this is sure to involve. Under such conditions, conscientious criticism of public acts, even conscientious refusal to participate in them, may have wide leeway. When it is clearly recognized that the state itself is not ultimate, but subject to natural or divine law that awaits better understanding, then in principle it must be recognized also that exploring, sensitive individual minds may become aware of the superhuman law before the majority do, and that minority views are well worth a careful hearing. But even in a democracy, the majority is likely to be pretty sure its way is right, and to have small patience with individual dissenters unless they get substantial support from some respected group. This is doubly true in times of social tension. When a community responds to such tension by adopting totalitarian forms, then of course the cause of the dissenting individual or group ceases to have any political standing at all. Dissenters become outlaws.

In such circumstances the church has sometimes supported, as well as it could, individuals whose conscience has brought them into conflict with the state. At other times the church has itself been so closely tied up with the state that its influence has been exerted to suppress, rather than to encourage dissent. For the church, like every other social institution, takes on more or less strongly the aspects of the culture in which it lives. Thus individual conscience, in responding to what it believes to be the will of God, sometimes finds itself

facing the combined weight of political power and churchly influence.

On the other hand, complete cultural absorption of an historically mature and spiritually active church, such as the Jewish and the Christian churches in their more vigorous forms, has thus far proved impossible. However sympathetic they may become toward a secular culture to which their members belong as citizens, their ultimate commitment is to God who transcends all culture, and whose demands cannot be reduced to identity with those of any human community or state. On occasion this basic commitment to the God of justice and love for all mankind and acknowledgment of his demands as a supreme obligation, has been strenuously reaffirmed by the whole religious fellowship that constitutes a church. Sometimes this reaffirmation has come from individuals and groups within it, who call the church itself back to its own special duty when that seems in danger of being forgotten. In performing that duty—proclamation by word and deed of the sovereignty and love of God—the clear-thinking church cannot do otherwise than to support the conscientious efforts of its members to do God's will, whether or not they have the government or the majority of their neighbors with them.

Church and State in Shifting Relations

In the course of its history in Europe and America, and more recently in the Far East, the Christian church has confronted the state in all sorts of roles. It began as an obscure sect and quickly became a persecuted fellowship in the sprawling, dictatorial Roman empire. Like the Jewish church from which it sprang, the Christian church refused to acknowledge the emperor as endowed with divine genius and in consequence suffered the charge of disloyalty. It affirmed the supremacy of God alone and looked forward to the triumph on earth of his kingdom and of his crucified Son. Therefore, it suffered the contempt of intellectuals and more or less violent attacks, in the name of patriotism, by local informers and

mobs and occasionally by the government. Yet in spite of all this—or perhaps partly because of it—the church gained adherents and prestige, until about 312 A.D. under the military usurper, Constantine I., it suddenly found itself not only tolerated but established in government favor. Christianity became the preferred religion of the empire, and the church a kind of junior partner of the state.

With this shift of fortune, a change of heart came to most leading churchmen. Instead of resistance to a frankly pagan government, they tried now to practice cooperation with a succession of nominally Christian governments. One result inevitably was a blunting of the Christian demands for devotion to a kingdom "not of this world." Clergy and laymen alike sought and found profitable places for themselves in the worldly society of the time. Powerful bishops engaged in palace politics, and religiously illiterate emperors sought to dictate church doctrine and policy. That there were very great gains for both church and state in the cessation of their long feud goes without saying. The church was brought into the main currents of intellectual and social life of the empire instead of being kept on the margin, an outsider in the community of human struggle. The state was committed, in name at least, to a revision of its policies in the direction of the Christian understanding of God's will as revealed through Jesus Christ, i.e., in the direction of humane rule, justice and the establishment of universal brotherhood. But these gains were largely offset by the growth of intolerant power-craving in the secularized church and the ecclesiasticized empire alike, until in the East the result was Byzantine absolutism—to this day a sinister phrase.

In protest against the whole tendency, individuals and groups separated themselves from both church and society as hermits and monks, devoted to simplicity and humility of life in the primitive Christian manner. And ironically enough, when in the West the imperial government collapsed, it was the separatist movement of monasticism, with its communities scat-

tered through the wilderness regions of western Europe, that became a chief bearer of the ancient civilization among the new barbarian conquerors. It was a monk who in 590-604, as Pope Gregory I., led in the assumption of imperial powers and responsibilities by the church, as the Dark Age of tribal migration and social turmoil closed down upon a demoralized society. With the failure of the Roman state in the West, the church became a kind of receiver in bankruptcy of Roman civilization, and a claimant to the position of senior partner in the new order that was to emerge.

Out of the melting pot of the Dark Age came a new civilization, in which Teutons, Northmen and Slavs, as well as Latins and Celts, were full-fledged members. Its political center of gravity had shifted northward from the Mediterranean to the Rhine. Rome itself was politically on the margin, no longer at the focus of empire. The new strong men—Charlemagne, William the Norman, Frederick Barbarossa, Philip Augustus—were not Romans but northerners, bred in a tradition that regarded the tribal society, the *folk* or community, as supreme. To their minds, the church was simply one phase of that human society over which their rule as kings or emperors should be unchallenged. Hence they tried, logically enough, to reduce the church once more to the status of junior partner or vassal, whose leadership and policies they should be free to dictate.

But if Rome was politically on the margin of the new mediaeval civilization, she was still at the center of ecclesiastical life. Churches throughout western Europe were brought more and more fully under the centralized authority of the Roman hierarchy. And the conception of the church maintained by that hierarchy was in flat contradiction to that of the Teutonic chieftains. To Rome, the church's authority was derived not from any human community or ruler but from God; and as spokesmen for God, the pope and his clergy must be regarded as having authority to challenge and to correct even kings and emperors. Sometimes this claim to supra-political

authority was used for clearly moral ends, as when Rome sought through the Peace of the Church and the Truce of God to lessen the brutalities of feudal warfare. Sometimes it was used rather to build up political power for the church as a rival of the state. On both accounts, the contest between papacy and empire, clergy and secular rulers, went on with varying shifts of success through the whole of the Middle Ages.

Yet so deeply involved were both contestants in the feudal culture they shared that, when the forces that brought on the modern age broke over Europe, pope and emperor stood side by side in a vain effort to stem the flood and maintain the old order. Both were more concerned to uphold feudalism against the new onrush of political nationalism and middle-class economic ascendancy than to bring their own long rivalry to a decisive conclusion. Each had more in common with his familiar antagonist of the Middle Ages than either could have with the rude new powers that were violently recasting both church and state.

The modern era was ushered in by the discovery and exploitation of the Americas, the rediscovery of pagan antiquity by the Humanists, the development of science and technology on an unprecedented scale and the parallel rise of strong nation-states and middle-class capitalism. In this era the relations of church and state have undergone drastic change. In many countries, of course, feudalism has persisted down to our own days. We ourselves have seen Russia, Spain, Mexico, and Germany thrust off their hereditary, land-owning nobility and royalty and seize, by violence, their places in the modern world of heavy industry and trade. Elsewhere—in Britain, the Low Countries, Scandinavia, Switzerland, the United States and France—the change-over had been made decades or centuries earlier, in a movement visibly under way since the Renaissance and Reformation, and not yet ended.

In the course of this movement, the claims of individual persons to freedom from institutional domination have been affirmed by Protestant churches and democratic states in ways

that feudal society could never have understood, and still resists wherever it has power, as in Japan, in Poland before the crash, or in the Balkan countries. On the other hand, modern national states have arisen, claiming for themselves ultimate sovereignty in terms that, in principle, negate the basic assumption of Jewish and Christian faith: the ultimate sovereignty of God alone. This in spite of the fact that most of the older modern states are nominally Christian. These two modern tendencies, to individualism and to state sovereignty unchecked by overruling religious faith, are not easy to harmonize. The result of their parallel development has been overemphasis first of the one, then of the other. The most crucial problems confronting the modern church arise out of that alternation.

With the rise of modern democracy in western Europe and the New World and the opening of new frontiers westward, the emancipation of the individual went rapidly forward, until the organic conception of society that had prevailed in the Middle Ages was all but destroyed. The right of individuals to do business without interference from either church or state was vigorously affirmed and practiced, in what has been distinctively a business man's civilization. The competition thus fostered in industry and trade was encouraged also in education, politics, science, invention, and the arts—even in religious life. The gains that resulted, in the way of increased production of goods, the spread of popular education, the growth of religious tolerance, and the establishment of a tradition of law-abiding government committed to the maintenance of individual rights to "Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness" are well known. The losses, through disintegration of a nominally international society under God into one of more or less irresponsible individuals and wholly irresponsible national states, were slower to make themselves felt.

But there is no longer any doubt of the need for new integration. Since effective international organization is still in

the future, the effort to achieve the needed unity has taken the way of seeking to make strong nation-states stronger, and to regiment individuals and all privately organized groups—home, business, labor, school, church—into a state-dictated pattern. In this drive toward national unity, the gains for individual and group liberty so painfully won through centuries are being swept away overnight. The countries most recently broken away from feudalism have passed almost at once into the new pattern of totalitarianism, without even a serious trial of democracy. And even in the older democratic nations, liberty is going down before what are believed to be military necessities. The armed defense of liberty, in this day of total war, requires the drastic reduction or abandonment, for an indefinitely long time, of the very liberties we all want to defend.

Anyone who today insists that individual conscience (a different thing from individual wishes, as we have seen) must not be overridden by the state has against him the present sweep toward political authoritarianism almost everywhere. But the Christian church, Catholic and Protestant, is committed in principle to the assertion that individual conscience must guide individual action, in peace and in war, else liberty of the most basic sort is gone. To this assertion Congregationalism has been, throughout its history, an emphatic witness. From the days of Oliver Cromwell, and of the still earlier Pilgrim settlers in New England, this offshoot of Puritanism has fought jealously for individual liberty of worship and moral action. Nothing less than that is at stake today. If great parts of the church, intent on the no less real need for discipline, are now giving their blessing to political regimentation, as the Catholic church has done in Italy and Spain, and as many of the Protestant clergy have done in Germany, one can only judge that they have fallen for a time into grievous confusion of mind or of heart.

This is not to say that the Christian church is or should be hostile to social integration, nor unconcerned about it. The

contrary is true. Neither does it mean that the church is or should be of one mind about what particular course of action each individual ought choose, especially in time of war. It means simply that a clear-thinking church must affirm that every Christian is to follow his own conscience through thick and thin, and that the right kind of social integration must grow out of such behavior. No other kind can last, nor deserves to last.

II. CHRISTIANITY AND WAR

Basic as this general principle is for Christian living, it obviously does not tell a man what he ought to do when the government orders him to go to war. Conscience does not operate in a vacuum, and a Christian rightly asks what specific guidance the church can give him toward finding the way that for him is right. This implies that Christian conscience takes shape within the tradition of the Christian church. And this, of course, is true. Christian judgments of right and wrong are shaped by the Christian tradition, in which along with much animal and human dross men have felt the Spirit of God at work.

Two primary landmarks for Christian conscience are the law of God as the great Hebrew prophets and teachers proclaimed it — justice, kindness, humbleness — and the life and death of Jesus Christ in devotion to the gospel of love he preached. But these are not self-explanatory, nor do they solve automatically those problems that involve conflicting loyalties. Such is the problem of war service for the Christian. He cannot simply read off an answer from the Bible. The will of God and the mind of Christ have to be interpreted, and the Christian will ask how the church has interpreted them as bearing on his present problem.

Broadly speaking there have been three main views. Some of these have been combined to make a fourth. The three main views all appeal to the New Testament. Each empha-

sizes a valid Christian teaching. The first view stresses love, the second justice, and the third loyalty. The first is that of the pacifist who believes that love and war are incompatible. The second is that of the crusader who would secure justice by the sword. The third is that of the warrior who would render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, even though they are very different from the things of God.

Pacifism

Christian pacifism is based on love. There is a pacifism which is not Christian that is based on the denial of the goodness of life. The present world, according to this view, is bad and the body is bad. Nothing in the world is worth struggling for, and any struggle for the body, against the body of another, is evil. This kind of pacifism appears in some Oriental religions. Christianity is not like this. Christian pacifism believes that life is good and the body as such is good. There are values worth struggling for, and justice is one of them. But war is not the way to get it.

The difference between the Christian pacifist and the Christian fighting man is as to the means to be employed. The pacifist says that love is an active power able to overcome evil. Jesus said more than "Resist not evil." He would have agreed also with Paul's word: "Overcome evil with good." Christian pacifism looks like mere negation in war time, because then it is driven to center effort on opposing war. But alike in war and peace, true Christian pacifism is active in seeking to overcome those evils and underlying dispositions out of which war arises. The early Christians, though unwilling to fight for the Roman empire, yet prayed for the empire and worked for the empire. They maintained that by their peaceable demeanor they did more for the peace of the empire than all the legions. The Society of Friends has well recognized that pacifism is much more than a refusal to fight. It is a way of life. In 1920 a world conference of Friends meeting in London made this statement:

"The Christianity which makes war impossible is a way of life which extirpates or controls the dispositions that lead to war. It eradicates the seeds of war in one's daily life. It translates the beatitudes out of the language of a printed book into the practice and spirit of a living person. It is not consistent for anyone to claim that his Christianity as a way of life stops him from war unless he is prepared to adjust his entire life—in its personal aspirations, in its relations with his fellows, in its pursuit of truth, in its economic and social bearings, in its political obligations, in its religious fellowships, in its intercourse with God—to the tremendous demands of Christ's way. If Friends are to challenge the whole world and claim the right to continue in the ways of peace while everybody else is fighting, they must reveal the fact that they are worthy of peace and that they bear in their bodies the marks of the Lord Jesus."

Christian pacifism admits of degrees. There is difference, first, as to the usability of force. Seldom have Christians gone the length of the anarchist who holds that force can never in any form be an instrument of love, and who would abolish the police as well as the army. Commonly Christians have recognized the need for police. The apostle Paul was willing to avail himself of the protection of a company of soldiers who were acting as policemen. In the Roman empire, policemen and soldiers were the same men. That was why some Christians were ready to serve in the army in peacetime, when soldiers were doing only police work, but not in wartime.

In the performance of police work, force can be an instrument of good-will because it is kept subject to certain conditions. The person who thus exercises force is not acting, ordinarily, in defense of his own rights. He tries to distinguish between guilty and innocent, and to arrest only the former.

The question of guilt and punishment, moreover, must be determined by someone other than the victim. There must be a court and a judge. And any penalty assigned should aim at the good of the offender, and should be subject to change in accordance with his attitude and conduct. This last rule would exclude even capital punishment, to which pacifists have com-

monly objected but not always. The Quakers at first did not. They held that capital punishment takes the life of a real criminal, whereas war takes the lives of conscientious soldiers who believe they are doing right. But whether or no capital punishment be admitted, the other conditions have never been fulfilled in war up to now: that guilt must be determined by a court, punishment applied by someone other than the injured party, and the penalty aimed at the good of the culprit. If there were an international court and an international police force, some of the conditions might be met, and in that case many who are pacifists with regard to war as now conducted between sovereign states would withdraw their objections. The difficulty would still remain that if a whole state were adjudged the culprit, the true offenders could not be dealt with individually, and many innocent persons would have to be punished with the guilty.

There are degrees of pacifism, also, as regards cooperation with the state. All Christians accept the words of Jesus, "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's." But the question has arisen whether the "powers" are ordained to govern Christians or only non-Christians. And what are "the things that are Caesar's?" Early Christians could not regard emperor-worship as belonging properly to Caesar, and pacifists have the same conviction about war service. Groups like the Mennonites, from whom came the greatest number of conscientious objectors in the United States during the first World War, have been inclined to look upon the state as ordained by God for control of non-Christians. Christians are responsible for control of themselves without help. They should recognize the state and pay taxes for its support, but that is all. They should not vote nor hold office—should not become active participants in political life. Quakers have been willing to do all of these things up to the point of war. They took a prominent share in the government of Pennsylvania until 1758, when the demands of the French and Indian wars made their continuance in the assembly no longer possible. There-

after they substituted social service for political activity. Of all pacifist groups, they are the least hostile to government. Both in England and in this country they have been willing to assume political office where military duties were not involved.³

The Just and Holy War

The second Christian position arises out of an emphasis on justice. The advocates of this view point out that Jesus was certainly indignant against the devourers of widows' houses, and his indignation so blazed against the money changers that he drove them from the temple with force of a sort. Overcoming evil with good is all very well as a long-term program, but it will not work quickly enough to restrain a criminal individual or nation from committing outrageous cruelty upon the innocent and helpless. The Christian must step in to prevent this, and deal with the offender for his good only after his hand has been stayed. Such conduct is not inconsistent with Christian love. Hate is directed to the sin, not the sinner. Even in the midst of fighting, love can be preserved in the heart, and even killing need not be a denial of love, since the destruction of the body is not a supreme evil, in view of the Christian belief in immortality.

This position was first worked out in detail by St. Augustine, and developed more fully by St. Thomas Aquinas and other Catholic theologians. They said that the Christian may participate only in a just war, for the punishment of injustice. The just war is not necessarily a defensive war alone, because if an injustice has been committed, the avenger may have to take the initiative, as Jesus did against the money changers. The just war requires that one side shall be just and the other unjust. The question of guilt thus becomes important. St. Augustine is the father of the idea of war guilt. Still more important is it to know who shall decide the question of guilt. St. Augustine held that it must be left to the ruler. He alone has the right to make war, and he alone may decide when

3. Guy Franklin Hershberger, "Pacifism and the State in Colonial Pennsylvania," *CHURCH HISTORY*, VIII, No. 1 (March, 1939), pp. 54-74.

war-making is just. The difficulty, of course, is that in case of a conflict between states, each ruler will regard his cause as just. In the Middle Ages, the papacy frequently acted as the judge. In modern times the papacy has lost that role, and no substitute has been found.

In any case, the common soldier is not ordinarily to determine the justice of a war. Yet the Catholic Church, the chief proponent of this second view, has never wholly excluded the possibility of individual conscientious objection. A recent committee of the Catholic Association for International Peace reported as follows:

"It is primarily the duty of the powers of the government to see to it that the requisite justifying conditions be fulfilled before war is entered upon. But the conscience of the individual soldier is not, in consequence, entirely exonerated. If the soldiers are conscripted or have voluntarily enlisted prior to the outbreak of the war, they are ordinarily not obliged to inquire into the justice of the war. They may presume that their country is in the right unless it is evidently in the wrong, and in doubt they must obey the commands of their lawful superiors. But if the war is clearly unjust, the only course that is open to the individual soldier, provided he cannot evade military service, is to refrain from inflicting injury on the enemy; otherwise, as is evident, he becomes a co-operator in injustice. It will seldom happen, however, that the private soldier will be in a position to declare the war undoubtedly unjust, because of his ignorance of many facts and considerations known frequently only to the country's highest officials."⁴

The Catholic Church has always taken the stand that its clergy and the members of the religious orders should be exempt from military service, regardless of whether the war is just. If the government refuses them exemption, the church does not counsel disobedience.

Conduct of a just war must meet a number of requirements. Combatants must be distinguished from non-combatants. Violence must not exceed necessity. A war cannot be regarded as just unless it has a reasonable hope of success, and the good

4. The Rev. Cyprian Emanuel, O.F.M., and the Committee on Ethics: *The Ethics of War*, p. 54. (Pamphlet no. 9 of the Catholic Association for International Peace, 1932.)

to be expected is in excess of the damage to be inflicted. These conditions are becoming increasingly difficult to fulfill in modern warfare. Airplanes and blockades cannot pick their targets as precisely as swords. Neither in Nanking, Barcelona, Warsaw, Rotterdam, nor London, neither in famine-threatened Belgium, Norway, nor France have the children, the aged and the women escaped. Total war has become so barbarous that Catholics who regard war as right and Christian if all the conditions of the just war are fulfilled begin now to doubt whether all of them ever can be fulfilled at one time. Says the committee just quoted:

"It is particularly the growing brutality of modern warfare and the comparative ease with which unbiased arbitration can be had in practically all instances that render the justification of war so difficult at the present time."

The idea of the just war as a holy war, in other words the idea of a crusade, arose in the Middle Ages as a fusion of the holy indignation of Jesus with other attitudes that were not Christian at all. The chief ingredient was the martial spirit of the northern barbarians who invaded the Roman empire and accepted the Christian religion with little understanding of its spirit. Jesus himself was turned into a tribal war lord, and the cross took the place of the horse tail as a standard in battle. The church tried to restrain their wild behavior, and the monks kept alive the pacific ideal. The church thought at least to limit warfare by the Peace of the Church, and the Truce of God. When these attempts were not too successful, a way was found to channel the fighting temper into a war against the Mohammedans of the East. The just war now became a holy war against the enemies of the true faith. Then even the monks put on armor. The Knights of the Temple, and of the Hospital, were military monastics.

The crusades failed, but the crusading attitude has survived. It was very prevalent in the American temper during the war to make the world safe for democracy. The blessing of Christ was pronounced by many ministers on this "war of the Lord."

War a Necessary Evil

The failure of the great crusade of 1914-18 to achieve its ideal objectives has inclined many in our day to the third Christian view of war, which is rooted in loyalty to the state. "Render unto Caesar" is the standard text. And do not confound the things of Caesar and the things of God.

The one who gave the most powerful statement of this view was Martin Luther, the leader of the Protestant Reformation. He was deeply sensible of the sin of man, of every man, even the best. We are all sinners. "None is righteous, no, not one." We are not saved by our own rectitude, but only by the grace of God. We cannot do his will, no matter how we try, and only his mercy can save us from eternal punishment. Since we are sinners no matter what we do, we cannot expect to attain perfection here as the monks tried to do, by retiring from the world into secluded communities. Hence the abolition of monasticism on Protestant soil. Neither can we withdraw, as the radical sects (like the Mennonites) have tried to do, from the state, ordained by God because of man's sin. We as sinners, even though Christians, are under the state still, along with all other men. The Christian, in short, belongs to two orders: the order of grace, forgiveness, love, and the order of nature, retribution, justice. The agent of the one is the church, of the other the state. The Christian is a member of both and must serve both, yet without confusing the two.

In the service of the state he must participate in war when ordered to do so—only the just war, of course, as determined ordinarily by decision of the ruler, as in the Catholic ethic. War is not to be used on behalf of the gospel of love, nor blessed in the name of Christ. There is to be no crusade. War may indeed be made upon the Turk, when necessary, but in the name of the natural order, not the divine order. The Christian soldier must preserve love in his heart and avoid the crusader's holy indignation and righteous exulting. He must fight saying, "Oh God, be merciful to me, a sinner."

This view has of late invaded much of British and some American Christianity. The last war was a crusade. Not this one. The commonest word on the lips of British Christians is "grim." This is a war without music, a frightful job to be seen through; not to be hallowed in the name of Jesus, just to be finished with desolation of heart.

Religious Individualism

A fourth view differs from the others in its emphasis on religious individualism. This position is not to be found among the Catholics and Lutherans for whom the decision as to the justice of a particular war is ordinarily left to the ruler. Neither is it to be found among out and out pacifist groups like the Mennonites and some Quaker meetings, who have disowned those of their members who have gone to war at all. The fourth position developed rather within the Puritan movement, in which so many varieties of religious opinion emerged that unity of any sort could be preserved only on the basis of mutual tolerance. The individual had to be left to his own conscience.

A popular application of this view to war is the word that James Russell Lowell placed in the mouth of the parson in the *Bigelow Papers*:

"Ef you take a sword an' dror it,
"An' go stick a feller thru,
"Guv'ment ain't to answer for it.
"God'll send the bill to you."

Compare this view with that of the officer in the last war who said to a group of conscientious objectors: "The trouble with you fellows is that you think too much. That's a mistake. Let the President do your thinking for you, that's what he is President for."⁵

Congregationalism and War

Congregationalism stands in the tradition of those religious bodies that hold, in line with this fourth view, that in crucial

5. Norman Thomas: *The Conscientious Objector in America* (New York, 1923), p. 126.

matters of right and wrong the individual must do his own thinking, no matter how difficult he may find it. The problem has not been simplified for the individual by a denominational decision that settles the question once for all. The rightfulness of the just war was affirmed by early American Congregationalists who wrote into the Saybrook Platform of 1708 the statement of the Westminster Confession of 1647, the chief doctrinal formula of English-speaking Calvinists—Presbyterian, Puritan, Congregationalist: "Christians may lawfully, now under the New Testament, wage war upon just and necessary occasions." Nevertheless, as to the justice of a particular war, and even of war as such, religious individualism has led Congregationalists to differ among themselves, and the opinion of the body as a whole has varied with regard to the conflicts in which the United States has actually engaged.

Generally speaking, Congregationalists have chosen between the first and the second positions we have considered, between pacifism and crusading. The reason is probably that Congregationalism belongs in the tradition of Calvin, who was more optimistic than Luther as to the possibility of erecting the kingdom of God on earth. This optimism was reinforced in the United States by "the American dream," the optimism of an expanding country. Luther's despair of the sinful world has not been shared, at least not until recently, by British and especially American Protestants. They have differed among themselves only as to the means to be used in building the kingdom. If they chose to use war, they had to regard it as just and holy. They were either pacifists or crusaders.

Congregationalism and American Wars

In the Revolutionary War the Congregationalists were crusaders. "No church in the American colonies had so large an influence in bringing on the war of independence as had the Congregational."⁶

In the Mexican War the situation was quite reversed. Along

6. William Warren Sweet: *The Story of Religions in America*, p. 256.

with Quakers and Unitarians, the Congregationalists provided the most stalwart opposition to the government's policy.

"Most outspoken were the resolutions of the Western Reserve General Association and of the Worcester North Conference of Churches. The latter concluded: '. . . we deem it our duty decidedly to discountenance this war; to dissuade any persons from enlisting in this service; and to employ our influence in every suitable method for bringing so unholy a contest to a speedy termination.'

"Congregational publications opposed the war without exception. The CHRISTIAN MIRROR of Portland, the CHRISTIAN OBSERVATORY of Boston, and the CONGREGATIONAL ALMANAC expressed their opposition in measured terms; but such restraint was unendurable to the BOSTON RECORDER and the OBERLIN EVANGELIST. The RECORDER thus bluntly stated its position:

"While Humanity is outraged, our country disgraced, the Laws of Heaven suspended and those of Hell put in force, by the conduct and continuance of the Mexican War, we shall not cease (to attempt at least) to rouse the public mind to a sense of the awful guilt brought upon this nation by what has been deservedly called "the most infamous war ever recorded upon the page of history."

"The Congregational pulpit, led by the Reverend Horace Bushnell and at least a dozen others, showed its traditional readiness to preach on public questions and outstripped other denominations in the legacy of war sermons which it left. Prominently woven into their fabric are the effects of the war on the slavery question and the morals of the nation and the inadvisability of acquiring more territory to be administered by a single, central government. Even a sermon for a dead soldier, which had proved a temptation for a defense of war by some, became, in the hands of the Reverend William P. Tilden of Concord, New Hampshire, an opportunity for a peace sermon, 'Shall the Sword Devour Forever?'⁷

In the Civil War, again, the situation was quite different. In that conflict, as in the Revolutionary War, the Congregationalists were among the groups who "tried to outdo each other in declaring their undying allegiance to the Federal government."⁸ Harriet Beecher Stowe, the daughter of a Congre-

7. C. S. Ellsworth, "American Churches and the Mexican War," AMERICAN HISTORICAL REVIEW, XLV, no. 2 (Jan., 1940), pp. 301-326. The above paragraphs from pp. 314-5.

8. Ray H. Abrams: *Preachers Present Arms* (New York, 1935), p. 5.

gational minister, stirred the north to a crusade with *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and her brother Henry Ward Beecher fanned the martial spirit. The Conference of Massachusetts in 1864, after three years of war, stated that "there can be no effectual reestablishment of the national authority by any negotiation which confesses the inability of the Government to subdue the rebellion by force of arms and proposes terms of peace to rebels still flying the flag of defiance."⁹

In the first World War the Congregationalists were again, in the main, among the crusaders, and some of the most blood-curdling utterances came from Congregational pulpits. At the same time, for the number of pacifist ministers in denominations other than the pacifist churches, the Congregationalists took second place. The Unitarians rated sixteen, the Congregationalists, thirteen.¹⁰ On the other hand, the number of Congregationalists among the conscientious objectors inducted into the army was small. Out of 1060 objectors in the camps subjected to intelligence tests, only four were Congregationalists, as compared with 554 from the various branches of the Mennonites. The ratio might have been changed somewhat if all the objectors had been included in the tests. Only about half of the total number of conscientious objectors were examined.¹¹

This record is quite enough to warrant the prediction that if the United States again goes to war, the Congregational church will leave each individual member to decide for himself on the rightfulness of fighting. How the majority within the denomination inclines will depend on the character of the particular war.

We shall probably not agree in our judgment of the right course for the government or for the individual. We can

9. Edward Needles Wright: *Conscientious Objectors in the Civil War* (Philadelphia, 1931), p. 36.

10. Ray H. Abrams: *op. cit.*, p. 196.

11. Mark A. May, "The Psychological Examination of Conscientious Objectors," *AMERICAN JOURNAL OF PSYCHOLOGY*, XXXI, no. 1 (Jan., 1920), pp. 152-61. Denominational classification on p. 154.

agree, as fellow Christians, in respect for one another even when we find ourselves bound to go different roads. In especial, we must give the fullest measure of support to the conscientious decisions of our young men on whom the heaviest load will fall, whatever their decisions may be. If they go into the armed forces we must minister to their needs, physical and spiritual. If they register as conscientious objectors we must exert ourselves no less strenuously to see that they get fair and reasonable treatment. Even criminals are guaranteed fair trials and reasonable punishment, though they are avowed enemies of society. Conscientious objectors have no intention of being enemies of society, and should not too glibly be classed as such, whatever measures of restraint may seem to be necessary in dealing with them.

This implies the need of far better understanding of their position than the last war revealed. We turn finally, therefore, to a brief note of what that position may involve.

III. THE SOCIAL ROLE OF CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS

This is not the place to argue the case for pacifism. That has been ably and repeatedly done elsewhere, in articles, pamphlets, and full-length volumes.¹² We are concerned in the few remaining paragraphs to suggest the social function of the conscientious dissenter as a loyal member of the national community. And first, as to who these dissenters are.

Objectors to a given war may belong to any one of three groups. First, they may be simply isolationists, who desire to avoid entanglement in an unpleasant world situation. They may have no conscientious convictions against taking part in war, but desire for other reasons to keep out. There are wide divergences within this group, and many of the most stalwart and high-principled opponents of American intervention in the present European or Asiatic conflicts belong to it, along

¹². See list of suggested readings.

with a host of others neither stalwart nor high-principled. But such differences are beside the mark here. The point is that simple isolationists, whatever their personal wisdom or character, are not conscientious objectors. The dissent we are talking about is the reverse of the most careless sorts of isolationism, and in primary motivation it differs from them all.

Genuine conscientious objectors may be discriminating non-pacifists: men and women, that is, who are ready to take part in a just war, but not in an unjust one. This is the position dramatized for American Christians by Professor Douglas Clyde Macintosh who, in a celebrated case decided by the Supreme Court five years ago, was denied United States citizenship because he took this position. It is quite in line with the tradition of his own Baptist church and with that of the Congregational churches, as we have seen. It involves in a very clear form appeal to individual conscience as final arbiter for the individual Christian. Yet those who take this position have been classed by the government as political objectors in the past and, under the present conscription act, no provision is made for them to seek exemption as conscientious objectors if they should want to do so. Only those who refuse on principle to take part in *any* war are regarded by the government as entitled to such listing, and to treatment as conscientious objectors.

Such men and women are pacifists, in the proper sense of the term. They may hold their positions on religious grounds or on purely moral, social, humanitarian grounds. They may differ widely as to the use of coercive force, especially physical violence, for the maintenance of social order. But they are alike in the rejection of war as a suitable method for achieving or safeguarding a humane way of life. They are not isolationists. Many of them, at least, have no desire to separate themselves from their community nor from the world beyond its borders, and the most experienced among them have no inclination to think of themselves as better than other folk.

It is the social role of such dissenters that chiefly concerns us in what follows.

Some Basic Principles

The pacifism that is likely to appear in the Congregational Christian fellowship involves a number of strongly held convictions about man and the world he lives in. These are by no means peculiar to pacifists. They are, rather, a part of the moral and religious heritage that a Christian pacifist shares with his fellow-Christians, even though he and they may differ widely in the practical inferences they draw from it.

First of all Christian pacifism holds, concerning the nature of man, that essential humanity is universal and almost indestructible wherever men live. It cannot and will not compromise with any tendency, so common in wartime, to regard some men—"the enemy"—as suddenly become beasts or devils. It can be realistic about men at war because it is realistic about them in time of peace, and knows how brutally they can behave without ceasing to be men. When a disappointed romanticism or a cynical naturalism clamors for the destruction of an enemy who cannot properly be treated as human, rational, and worthy of trust, Christian realism can steadily insist that under the brutality and treachery that war brings, there are human beings who must be treated as such. This means two things in especial. Human beings do not behave like brutes without some compelling causes that deserve to be understood and put right. And human beings have capacities for present and future response to humane approaches that no subhuman being on earth can have. To ignore either the past or the potential future in dealing with men is to act without realism.

Next it holds that human society is to be understood best in terms of community, in which individuals and groups blend inseparably in a living, growing whole. To it the pacifist wholeheartedly belongs, and would not escape its struggles if he could. Of this whole, the state is but one mode of organ-

ization—the most powerful, indeed, but in no proper sense all-inclusive nor of absolute authority. Not only is governmental power properly limited by law, but the law itself is a growing system. It grows partly through judicial decisions that deal with problem cases not exactly covered by existing law. It grows also through fresh legislative enactments in response to newly recognized social needs, perhaps made known through sharp social criticism or even civil disobedience—as the abolition of legalized slavery was preceded by years of protest and lawbreaking by some of the pillars of northern society. Only a state sensitive to the wider life of its community, as expressed by all sorts of voices, is grounded in the actualities of social existence.¹³ Moreover, the community to which every state must thus react is visibly growing wider with each passing generation. What was for the signers of our Declaration of 1776 merely “a decent respect to the opinions of mankind” (meaning western Europe) has become for us a life-and-death concern over the active doings of six continents. Not even a great nation is big enough to contain the life of a modern man, equipped with newspapers and radio, and vulnerable to blows struck on the other side of the earth. No state, however great, can include the whole of its own community nor disregard the rest of the human world.

Next, beyond the circle of all human communities is the deep-bedded, exacting order of reality—half-natural, half-moral in its manifestations—to which human behavior finds itself again and again constrained to readjust its ways. This is the order referred to above in the discussion of conscience, the order traditionally called *lex naturae*, “natural law,” in the Stoic phrase that meant not simply a law of physical events but the basic law of human nature rooted in the eternal world itself. The old phrase is out of favor in many quarters today, but the fact remains that man is not master of his fate.

13. Cf. R. M. MacIver: *The Modern State*, chapter V, 149-192, an unanswerable analysis first published in 1926, before Nazism came into power; and his *Leviathan and the People*, 70-73, published in 1939 with the whole totalitarian pattern visible, though before the present war had broken out.

Call it what he will, an order confronts him whose demands he must learn and acknowledge. The Christian name for this order is the will of God, and by that name the Christian pacifist is content to know it. He is, or should be, the first to acknowledge that his efforts to learn its requirements and live by them are blundering at best. But its authority over him and all men, transcending in principle the authority of any state, seems to him inescapable; and if at some point, such as the habitual resort to war, it seems to him that the familiar policies of states (including his own) have resulted in repeated disaster on a rising scale, he can hardly do otherwise than to dissent from that way, not only as a Christian but as a loyal citizen.

Finally, there is the Being of God beyond all else: the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, whose power and saving love are the last bedrock of Christian faith. However wrong men's decisions may be, his own or his neighbors', the Christian relies on the steady pressure of God's presence to overrule the wrong moves again and again, and in unpredictable ways to bring good out of situations dark with evil.

Without some such presuppositions, pacifism would be an irresponsible dream.

Problems for Pacifists

Even when so fortified, the pacifist's way is beset by its own special difficulties. Perhaps first and most painful is the hot conflict of loyalties within himself. He is trying to act in line with the will of God as it appears to him, and for the well-being of his brother men everywhere. But his emotional roots are set deep in his home, his circle of friends, his country, and refusal to fight in defense of these when they are threatened is torment for any sensitive man. It is torment, moreover, that must be borne without much applause. Even the grim reassurance that comes to the soldier from having a hard decision backed by majority opinion is not for the pacifist today. He walks almost alone.

A second major problem arises just here: how to convey by his conduct the message he wants it to carry. His intent is to serve his country in what seems to him a better way than fighting. But his conduct is more likely to be interpreted as disloyalty or cowardice. With enough wisdom and courage, he will make at least some of his compatriots understand the claims by which he is bound—more this time, one may hope, than in any previous war situation. Yet the impossibility is almost self-evident of conveying by any gross gesture, such as refusal to engage in war service, a complex, subtle, and unfamiliar set of convictions that have grown slowly and must spread slowly.

This problem is closely tied to another. Pacifism in wartime is most weighty if it goes with full participation in the life of the community in time of peace. It cannot be said too often that the pacifist belongs in the life of his neighborhood, his home town, his country—not out of it. The notion that his role is or should be that of a hermit is sheer delusion, whether it be held by his friends, his critics, or himself. Escapist pacifism is not the sort that concerns us here. Yet the pressure toward personal isolation is extremely hard to resist. It is especially dangerous if the pacifist himself is inclined to shrink from rough handling, or to think of himself as above the common herd, or perhaps even to court martyrdom as a way of special distinction. To yield to such pressures, from within or without, is to lose hold of a vital principle: that genuine conscientious objection is not an individual luxury but a social duty, whose place is not in some cell of personal purity but in the thick of the human struggle.

Problems of Non-Pacifist Objectors

Much of what has just been said applies also to non-pacifist Christians who regard a particular war as not just, and who therefore cannot conscientiously take part in it. If war has already broken out before they are called to military service, and they feel constrained to refuse, they are as truly conscien-

tious objectors to that war as their pacifist neighbors who object to all war. They too will then risk misunderstanding, ostracism, and grave damage to things they hold dear. The refusal of a government to acknowledge their claim to be treated as conscientious objectors must be regarded as involving a failure to recognize the moral vigor and the social value of their stand.

It is equally true that the position of such objectors involves special difficulties for both the government and themselves. Since they do not object to war as such, it is hard to see how they can object on conscientious grounds to accepting military training in times when their government is not a belligerent. But once enrolled in the military forces, they cannot refuse to fight, if war comes, without violating the obligations they assume in putting on the uniform and engaging in regular military training. A civilian may fairly claim more freedom than a soldier in respect to an order to go to war. The non-pacifist position interposes no hindrance to one's becoming a soldier in all good conscience, and by so much it increases the difficulties for one who then finds it impossible to carry on. The government likewise is faced with doubled difficulty in such an event. For it cannot let soldiers decide when they will fight and when they will not, without wrecking the morale of the fighting forces. Yet it cannot simply treat honest objectors in uniform as traitors or deserters without endangering the morale of its citizenry. One can understand why a government may prefer the simpler task of dealing with civilians who refuse from the outset to engage in military service at all.

A different problem is posed by a non-pacifist who refuses to accept even military training because it seems to him that the wars in which his country is most likely to engage would be unjust wars. Though different in principle, this position in practice may be scarcely distinguishable from pacifism of the more factual kinds, that emphasizes chiefly the nature and consequences of modern warfare rather than general prohi-

bitions of violence. We have seen that Roman Catholic moralists who set out from the theory of the just war are being carried in practice toward the denial that modern total war can be just. The logical outcome of this trend is pacifism. Meanwhile, the legal position of the non-pacifist objector, along with that of the non-religious objector, is in the United States the most difficult of all.

Conscientious Objectors and Community Well-Being Today

By universal consent, Christianity and democracy are under fire of a fierceness unknown hitherto in our time—perhaps unprecedented in all history. It is in their defense that we are being urged to fight. As we have seen, many Christians hold that fighting is the first thing that needs to be done now, and it may be they are right. Certainly it is the course to which strong impulses first point, and a majority of men in the western democracies would probably say those impulses should be followed. However that be, conscientious objectors cannot go along in that course. Must they, then, be written off as a dead loss or worse in a community at war?

We think the answer is no. Their struggle to help toward clearing away the tensions that result in war can best be carried on before armed conflict breaks out, and if they have not done what they could then to forestall it, when the break comes they have little claim to be taken seriously. But suppose their refusal to engage in war service is a consistent part of a whole pattern of life already known to their neighbors, especially their fellow church-members, as devoted in all sorts of weather to the quest for a decent, peaceful world. Then for at least two reasons it seems fair to regard them as performing in wartime a social function of high importance to both democracy and the Christian cause.

First, in a time when emotional stress tends to make chaos of all the familiar trusted landmarks, there is especial need

that some men and women shall stand against the current if their convictions call them to do so. In a time like the present, even trivial instances of plain good faith are at a premium. The everyday sort of honesty that says what it means, and stands by it, is a good thing even for those who cannot agree with what is thus affirmed and maintained. It helps to keep trust alive in a difficult time. More than that, conscientious objectors in wartime may help to prevent the mind of the community from fusing and hardening in the war pattern. If democratic life is to survive total war, it must be because the seeds of freedom are not wholly crushed. By insisting on the permanent validity of objectives sought and methods employed in time of peace, pacifists in time of war can help keep those seeds alive. By their very willingness to maintain a minority view under pressure, they bear witness of a sort to the indestructibility of the democratic ideal and the Christian conscience, in one of its forms. That is, perhaps, their most obvious service to the cause of healthy community life.

There is, secondly, a more debatable service they may be rendering. Every community has to grow in insight, or stagnate and lose vital ground. In the process of advance, minority groups have often been the growing-points for the community to which they were devoted, and that (paradoxically enough) through their very differences from its established patterns. This comes about, needless to say, on condition that the minority has become aware of the right line of advance at a new point, and that the community comes to share the view at first disapproved. Whether or not conscientious objectors to war are now, or may become, such a growing-point for our society no one yet knows. Only the future can show whether they or their soldier neighbors are more nearly on the right line. Meanwhile, humility and scrupulous fairness on both sides are called for. Whichever may be more nearly right, such attitudes will make for social health in the midst of honest difference. Loyalty and courage can be shown in more than one way.

SUGGESTED READING

- Max Plowman: *The Faith Called Pacifism* (J. M. Dent, 1936). Brief, vivid, clear.
- R. B. Gregg: *The Power of Non-violence* (J. B. Lippincott, 1934). A pioneer analysis of the basic theory of non-violent resistance.
- Sir Norman Angell: *Preface to Peace* (London: H. Hamilton, 1935).
- A. J. Muste: *Non-violence in an Aggressive World* (Harper and Bros., 1940).
- C. E. Raven: *War and the Christian* (Macmillan, 1938).
- J. K. Ryan: *Modern War and Basic Ethics* (Catholic University of America, 1933). The Christian case against modern war, by a Protestant and a Roman Catholic.
- Major-General J. F. C. Fuller: *The Dragon's Teeth* (London: Constable and Co., 1932). A soldier's realistic analysis of what war is and does.

Pamphlets:

- Pacifist Handbook*. By eight organizations opposed to war. (Third revised printing, February, 1940) 10c.
- What about the Conscientious Objector?* A supplement to the *Pacifist Handbook*. (May, 1940) 15c.
- Pacifist Program in Time of War, Threatened War, or Fascism*. By R. B. Gregg. (Pendle Hill Pamphlet No. 5, 1939) Exceptionally concrete, realistic, and helpful.
- Help Wanted!* The experiences of some Quaker Conscientious Objectors. By Arle Brooks and Robert J. Leach. (American Friends Service Committee, and Pendle Hill, 1940) 15c. Case studies based on records of the first World War.

Have you read Walter Horton's new book, "Can Christianity Save Civilization?" If not, it seems to me that you ought to do so because it is probably as important a book on Christianity and the present world as will be coming out for some time. And have you read the new book by Nels Ferré, "The Christian Fellowship"? This book probably will prove to be a milestone in the attempt to bring order out of chaos in our thinking about the church and about modern society. The last chapter, "The Christian Fellowship as a Social Trend," is very important, and I am glad to recommend it and the whole book to the readers of our magazine. (Both books published by Harper & Bros..)

—DWIGHT J. BRADLEY

"LEST WE FORGET"

Every American Christian wants to give to the relief of the innocent victims of war. Many of us are, however, bewildered by the almost universal suffering and by the multitude of appeals with which we are bombarded.

Because it is difficult to know all the facts, because we hear so much of tragedy that we become hardened and do nothing—for these reasons among others, the General Council of Congregational Christian Churches meeting in Berkeley, California in August of this year created *The Committee for Assistance to War Victims*.

This is *not* another relief agency.

With a widely representative membership of one hundred people, of which twelve act as an Executive Board, *The Committee for Assistance to War Victims* will provide our churches with authentic information on the major areas of human need and channel your gifts to some of the organizations established to meet them.

On the back cover of this magazine is printed the resolution unanimously voted at Berkeley. Following it is the list of agencies which the Committee especially commends to you at this time.

It is important to remember that this Committee will serve continuously during the period of crisis. It will keep you in touch with changes which will undoubtedly occur and recommend, if it seems wise, modifications in and additions to the present list.

The Committee is asking that Armistice Sunday, November 10, be set aside, in all our churches, for the special consideration of this appeal. This day will be a tragic anniversary for us all unless we find release in the joy of sacrificial giving.

This is more than an appeal for money. It is an invitation to world-wide service.

(Your gift may be sent through your Church Treasurer, or directly to the office of the Committee, 289 Fourth Avenue, New York, N. Y.)

BOYNTON MERRILL, D.D.
Chairman

MRS. JAMES W. BIXLER
Vice-Chairman

ELBERT A. HARVEY
Treasurer

MRS. ROYAL G. WHITING
Executive Secretary

AN OPPORTUNITY FOR OUR READERS

"Stirred by the need of the innocent victims of war, and realizing the profound desire of our churches for coordinated effort to meet the ever-increasing suffering made inevitable by the spread of conflict; the General Council of Congregational Christian Churches meeting in Berkeley in August, 1940, hereby creates a ***Committee for Assistance to War Victims*** through which our denomination may advise our churches and implement the will of their members to assume their full share of the common sacrifice necessary to meet the practical human need of this emergency and to express the constructive goodwill for which the Christian church must ever stand." (Voted at the Meeting of the General Council, Berkeley, California, August, 1940.)

Gifts sent to this Committee will be divided among the following well-known agencies. You may designate your contribution to any one of them:

STARVING CHILDREN. Millions of little children in Europe feel the dreadful aftermath of war. We must feed them through ***The American Friends Service Committee.***

HOMELESS REFUGEES. Men and women persecuted for their religious beliefs and political utterances, children made homeless by air raids are coming to the United States for refuge. We must provide it. Funds will go to ***The American Committee for Christian Refugees.***

IMPOVERISHED EUROPEAN CHURCHES. Poverty and destruction have come to our sister churches in Europe. We must help their work at home and assist them to provide food and shelter for their missionaries isolated abroad. ***Funds will be divided among three approved agencies.***

FOOD AND SHELTER FOR THE CHINESE. War is now an old story in China. Each year the suffering becomes more acute. We must bring relief and courage to that great country through ***The Church Committee for China Relief.***

Checks should be sent to:

ELBERT A. HARVEY, *Treasurer*

THE CONGREGATIONAL CHRISTIAN COMMITTEE FOR ASSISTANCE
TO WAR VICTIMS

289 Fourth Avenue, New York, N. Y.